

30th Annual USOE MLK Contest

Jr. High Grand Prize Essay Winner

Chloe Fowers – Syracuse Arts Academy Charter School
Essay title “MLK Essay”

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” To me, this means that using my voice, to stand up for things that are morally right, is far more important than staying silent to benefit myself. I think that Dr. King was trying to say that we should all have the decency of character to show courage in the face of our enemies, even if it is difficult. Our friends have the ability to hurt us far worse through ignorance and apathy, than any enemy ever could through hurtful words and deeds.

Jr. High is a difficult time of life. Sometimes it feels as though we are all trying so hard to climb the ladder of where we want to be, that it is easy to step on a few hands on the way up. I have experienced first-hand the effects of bullying for the gain of popularity, or status. Bullies are weak, and find their strength in being mean and cruel in hidden places, and in hidden ways. Bullying has many forms. It can be turning away when someone tries to talk to you; it can be putting your hand over a chair when someone tries to sit next to you; and it can be laughing at someone, instead of with them. There are many subtle forms of bullying that happen every day. The most hurtful about these moments, are the friends that look on and, “don’t want to get involved.” Have we all become so apathetic?

I know how it feels to be on the outside of a circle that will not let you in. I found strength in calling my peers out on some of these things. What I found, is it eventually happens to most all of us at one time or another. The people around me know they are safe with me, because I don’t tolerate bullying. I don’t remember everything that has been done and said to me, but I always remember the kind words of my friends coming to

my defense. When I was denied a place to sit, I remember the voice that spoke up and said, “ Hey, come sit over here.”

We are all embarking on uncharted territory as we begin our journey through young adulthood, but I will remember the words of Dr. King, and I will let my voice be heard. I will have the moral courage to stand up for the things I know are right. I will not step over anyone to climb a little higher on the ladder of life, or sit silently by as someone else hurts the people I care about. If we are going to change the world and the apathy that exists, we have to care enough to involve ourselves in the issues that matter. We can't sit silently, and hope someone else will do it for us.